



Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

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Members Resume Talks on Fisheries Subsidies

The fisheries subsidies negotiating group is the first to resume talks in 2018, as Members met the week of January 29th to discuss the way forward with the negotiations.

This follows the MC11 ministerial decision where trade ministers instructed delegates to negotiate a comprehensive agreement that covers all aspects mentioned in Sustainable Development Goal 14.6, instead of a partial interim deal on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

This first discussion was “encouraging in the manner Members intervened and seriously considered how to implement what ministers had instructed,” said departing Jamaican Ambassador Wayne McCook.

This was his last meeting as he will be replaced in his position as chair of the Negotiating Group on Rules in the next few weeks as the process to select new chairs for certain negotiating bodies is set to begin the week of February 5th.

This gathering saw delegates holding constructive discussions on the best way to tackle fisheries subsidies issues. Two broad camps emerged from the discussion.

Those like the European Union, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Norway, the ACP Group (African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group – 62 members), and the Latin American Group, who call for an immediate resumption of text-based discussions, particularly on issues where progress was made in the lead up to the MC11.

Prior to the MC11, various proposals on the issue tabled by delegates were compiled into two documents to simplify the negotiations.

The EU said the Ministers’ decision on fisheries subsidies essentially call on Members to build on the progress made in negotiations as reflected in these documents.

The second camp, including others like the U.S., advocated for an intensification of work through exchange information to better unlock previous impasses and avoid reverting immediately back to the “heavily-bracketed text” tabled last year.

The U.S., like China, suggested that some homework be undertaken in the first place. For instance, the U.S. requests that the WTO Secretariat produce working documents listing vessels and operators determined to be engaging in IUU fishing as well information on overfished stocks and fleet capacities in order to better inform negotiators.

The U.S. also called on Members to submit their fisheries subsidies notifications in addition to information on their IUU fishing determination processes and requirements or offers for technical assistance to help make progress in the negotiations, a Geneva trade official said.

Delegates did not find these views to be conflicting, as most supported the need for analytical work and technical sessions to gather more information to help move the negotiations forward. Some suggested producing a calendar of negotiating rounds so that capital-based authorities can also be involved in the process.

Geneva Watch is published by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Egg Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada and Canadian Hatching Egg Producers to report on the various events occurring in Geneva, particularly on the WTO negotiations on agriculture.

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